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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 H-02 DHA-02 ORM-02 /029 W

R 032030Z NOV 76  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7783  
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

082579  
ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS  
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
(☒) Release (☐) Excise (☐) Deny

Exemption(s):  
Declassify: (☐) In Part (☒) In Full  
(☐) Classify as    (☐) Extend as    (☐) Downgrade to     
Date    Declassify on    Reason   

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 7222

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, PINS, AR  
SUBJECT: IRISH PRIEST PATRICK RICE DETAINED UNDER STATE OF SEIGE

REF: STATE 268058

1. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. FATHER PATRICK RICE IS PRESENTLY BEING HELD IN A LA PLATA JAIL UNDER PROVISIONS OF STATE OF SEIGE. IRISH EMBASSY HAS VISITED HIM SEVERAL TIMES AND REPORTS THAT HE APPEARS TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH. THE SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF RICE'S RELIGIOUS ORDER HAS COME TO ARGENTINA FROM RUEOPE, BUT HAS NOT YET BEEN ALLOWED TO VISIT THE PRISONER. (ONLY IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS AND, GENERALLY IN CASE OF FOREIGNERS, CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVES, ARE ALLOWED TO VISIT PERSONS DETAINED UNDER STATE OF SEIGE.) IRISH EMBASSY, PAPAL NUNCIO AND ARGENTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE ALL WORKING ACTIVELY "BEHIND THE SCENES" TO SECURE RICE'S EXPULSION FROM THE COUNTRY, IRISH EMBASSY OFFICIALS TOLD EMBOFF. OFFICIAL ALSO SAID THAT ARREST APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A "MISTAKE," BUT THAT GOA OFFICIALS ARE "STALLING" ON BRINGING CHARGES OR ISSUING RELEASE ORDER. IF THE CASE IS NOT RESOLVED EARLIER, IRISH EMBASSY SAID A PETITION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WILL BE FILED FOR RICE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A NEW LAW ON RIGHT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. (THE NEW LAW, DATED OCT. 27, 1976, PERMITS PERSONS WHO ARE HELD UNDER STATE OF SEIGE TO PETITION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY 90 DAYS AFTER THEIR ARREST ORDER. THE INTERIOR MINISTRY THEN HAS 90 DAYS TO RULE ON THE PETITION. APPROVAL WILL BE GRANTED ONLY IN CASES OF DETAINEES WHO ARE NOT CONSIDERED THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY.) END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

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2. BEGIN SECRET X-GDS. IRISH EMBASSY OFFICIAL (PROTECT) CONFIDENTIALLY RELATED HIS EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE RICE EPISODE TO EMBOFF TODAY (NOV. 3). RICE WAS FORCEABLY TAKEN FROM A VILLAGE CHURCH SERVICE BY UNIDENTIFIED AND HEAVILY ARMED MEN LATE MONDAY NIGHT (OCT. 11). HE WAS FIRST BROUGHT TO A NEARBY POLICE STATION, THEN BUNDLED INTO THE TRUNK OF A CAR AND TAKEN TO AN UNIDENTIFIED LOCATION. THERE HE WAS ROUGHLY INTERROGATED FOR TWO DAYS, BEATEN AND BURNT WITH CIGARET BUTTS. ON OCT. 14 HE WAS DELIVERED TO A FEDERAL POLICE DETENTION CENTER AND GOA OFFICIALLY INFORMED THE IRISH EMBASSY THAT RICE WAS BEING DETAINED UNDER STATE OF SEIGE. HE WAS THEN TRANSFERRED TO VILLA DEVOTO AND LATER LA PLATA PRISON. SINCE HIS FIRST INTERROGATION SESSION, HE HAS BEEN SATISFACTORILY TREATED. HOWEVER, IRISH OFFICIALS SAW THE BURN MARKS NEAR HIS EYES AND ON HIS HANDS ON THEIR FIRST VISIT.

3. THE IRISH EMBASSY OFFICIAL ALSO TOLD EMBOFF THAT IRISH GOVERNMENT CALLED IN THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR IN DUBLIN TO PROTEST RICE'S ILL TREATMENT. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL, THE ARGENTVUE AMBASSADOR DECLARED THAT SUCH INCIDENTS WERE TOTALLY OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, THAT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY AND ARMED FORCES CONDUCTED THEIR BUSINESS AS THEY SAW FIT AND THAT THE FORN MINISTRY COULD ONLY DO WHAT WAS DICTATED TO IT BY THE ARMED FORCES. THE AMBASSADOR THEN CONFIDENTIALLY ADVISED GOI TO USE WHAT OTHER CHANNELS IT HAD AT ITS DISPOSAL TO HELP SECURE THE RELEASE OF FATHER RICE.

COMMENT: WHILE THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR'S CLAIMS OF FORN MINISTRY IMPOTENCY IN SECURITY CASES, EVEN THOSE INVOLVING FOREIGNERS, COMES AS NO SURPRISE, HIS FRANKNESS WITH GOE OFFICIALS AND HIS CONFIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION THAT THEY APPLY PRESSURE THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS ARE REMARKABLE. IT DOES, HOWEVER, POINT UP THE RELATIVE STATUS OF THE MINISTRIES UNDER THE CURRENT MILITARY REGIME, AS WELL AS THE FRUSTRATION OF ARGENTINA'S OFFICIAL OVERSEAS REPRESENTATIVES IN HANDLING SENSITIVE BILATERAL ISSUES INVOLVING HUMAN RIGHTS.  
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